

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

Elizabeth C. Brown
Legislative Director
Connecticut Commission on Children

**Testimony before the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
Regarding Raised Bill 5764, An Act Concerning After-School Programs**

March 10, 2006

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth C. Brown, and I am here today to testify in favor of Raised Bill 5764, An Act Concerning After-school Programs

Connecticut is home to 610,000 youth between the ages of 5 and 17. At least two-thirds of these youth live in homes where parents work. Less than one-third of these—approximately 185,000—are involved in supervised, enriching after-school programs.

We know that after-school programs keep children safe while teaching the skills and core values they need to succeed. We know that the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for violent juvenile crime and that good after-school programs can cut, by as much as 75%, the risk of becoming involved in crime.

We know that it costs more than \$514,000 to house one youth at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School while it takes about \$2400 to provide a quality after-school program. Connecticut has the sixth-highest juvenile custody rate in the nation—508 per 100,000 juveniles—despite being one of only three states that send all 16- and 17-year-old offenders to adult court.

Cost Benefit Studies

- \$15 saved for every \$1 invested in prevention. (*Kim Coletti, Williams and Helper, 1995*)
- 10% increase in quality early childhood programs will save \$7/person in future criminal justice costs. (*National Crime Prevention Council*)

Connecticut has developed a long-term blueprint for helping communities to provide safe and enriching programs and activities in the after-school hours. This bill continues that commitment. It seeks to provide grants to towns and cities that demonstrate leadership and commitment in mobilizing private and public sector resources to provide high-quality, enriching out-of-school time activities.

This bill embeds in public policy the work of the State After-School Council, established to guide public policy concerning after-school programs. Led by the state Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, and the Commission on Children, with representation from several other state agencies, providers, teachers, school superintendents, business and funders, the After-school Council has developed a comprehensive framework to help better coordinate and sustain after-school programs. It was developed in cooperation with more than 40 organizations that work with children and youth in towns and cities throughout Connecticut.

For two years, the legislature has funded three pilot after-school grant programs, in Plainville, Thompson and Montville. Grant funds helped school districts bring broad stakeholders together to assess the needs of their own communities and map out local plans to meet these needs. These towns have been successful in garnering business and philanthropic support for the programs. They have rallied their communities around the idea of keeping kids safe and productive when parents are working; they've also shown the importance of learning in many settings.

Connecticut's leadership translated into a three-year grant from the C. J. Mott Foundation to establish a state After-School Network. The Connecticut School Age Child Care Association, (CSACA), a nonprofit organization, now acts as the State After-school Network, under the leadership of the state Department of Education. The Network provides leadership and technical assistance to communities regarding after-school programs, including professional development training and guidance on financial sustainability.

The bill before you will help guide grant making and help implement the After-School Blueprint for Connecticut. If successful, the \$ 5 million appropriation will help leverage national, private, and local dollars to help sustain high-quality after-school programs in all Connecticut communities. The grant will be available to all communities and help all of Connecticut children.

We urge your support of this visionary public policy that recognizes the importance of providing children and youth with adult supervision in the after-school hours to promote health, safety, and learning.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.